

## THE WINDSOR TIMES &gt; NEWS

**Dry fountain dampens spirits**[Print Page](#)**By Matthew Hall**  
**Times Editor**

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Support for emptying the fountain on the Town Green may be drying up as the Town Council is set to reopen debate on the topic at its August 19 meeting.

At the July 1 meeting, the Town declared a Stage 2 Water Emergency that asks residential customers to reduce consumption by 30 percent while irrigation only customers are being asked for a 50 percent reduction in order to meet a state mandated overall reduction of 25 percent below 2004 levels.

As part of the effort to educate residents on water conservation, the council voted to drain the 8,000 gallon fountain and erect signs that said "Fountain shut of due to water emergency."



**DRY** — The fountain in Downtown Windsor was drained in early July to promote water conservation. Residents have begun complaining and the Town Council will consider refilling the fountain with recycled water at their August 19 meeting. - Photo by Matthew Hall

The fountain loses approximately 100 gallons per day, but everyone involved said the fountain's losses were minimal given the overall water picture. At the July 1 meeting Parks and Facilities Maintenance Superintendent Jim O'Brien said, "All that gets out is evaporation and splash out. It doesn't amount to a lot in the grand scheme of things."

At the time of the decision, shutting off the fountain was considered a symbolic gesture aimed at raising awareness of the ongoing water shortage. Councilmember Debora Fudge said she understood the opposition to emptying the fountain but said draining it had increased awareness. "We are in a mandatory 25 percent water conservation and it was a signal to the community that we really need to cut back all of our water usage," she said. "The fountain is a visual reminder to the community that we all need to do it. If we didn't lead by example, then nobody else would be saving water."

Fudge said failure to comply with the state mandated cuts could lead to even more draconian reductions in water supply in the future and she hoped the controversy around the fountain had spurred some residents to cut back. "I'm glad they're talking about the fountain being off," she said. "I think the people that are angry about it aren't taking the water shortage seriously and they should."

While the vote for the water emergency was 4-0, councilmember Sam Salmon voiced strong opposition to draining the fountain. "I didn't think that (the fountain) was really a water waster," he said. He said the council had to constantly balance costs versus amenities and that the value of a working fountain outweighed the costs associated with its operation or any symbolic meaning. "It sends a message, but I like the fountain, it's an important part of downtown," he said. "We don't have a lot of art in Windsor and if you can call it art then it is one of the very few things that you can call a public display."

Councilmember Steve Allen was absent from the July 1 meeting but said he would not have supported emptying the fountain. "I understand that it's making a statement, but at the same time, I feel like that is a substantial piece of our summer celebration on the Green," he said.

As Windsor residents gathered on the Green for the Tuesday Night Kid's Movie, individuals walking along the empty fountain reacted with a mix of confusion and disappointment to the sight of the dry fountain.

Downtown resident Anglita Llerena said a working fountain added a sense of peace and calm to the area. She said it was a popular destination for her granddaughter. "It's sad because she loves to come and play and see the water," she said.

Fred Langley, owner of Langley's on the Green and Pizza DePaoli, said the fountain itself wasn't a priority for him, but he opposed any decision that made downtown less hospitable to visitors.

"If a dry fountain is going to keep people from coming Downtown, then I'm for putting water back in," he said.

A formal discussion of the issue will occur at the Council's August 19 meeting. So far, the fountain has been filled with fresh water, but it may be possible to switch over to recycled water. During the July 1 meeting, staff said Windsor's recycled water is clean enough to use to fill a swimming pool.

Allen said it made sense to move to using recycled water as any fresh water used in the fountain was quickly contaminated by the presence of people, animals and vegetation. "As for using recycled water, I'm hoping that that works," he said. "My understanding is that it is ok for body contact. The water, even when we put potable water in the fountain, it doesn't stay potable."

According to the California Department of Public Health's 2009 regulations for recycled water, properly treated recycled water is approved for body contact and could be used to fill pools or ponds

According to the document recycled water has been approved for "nonrestricted recreational impoundment" which means recycled water can be used without restriction in projects that involve recreational body contact such as pools or swimming holes.

Recycled water has also been specifically approved for use in decorative fountains, flushing toilets, priming drain traps, industrial process water that may come into contact with workers, structural fire fighting, commercial laundries, consolidation of backfill around potable water pipelines, artificial snow making for commercial outdoor use, and some commercial car washes.

Fudge said she understood that the fountain was important to residents and she would support refilling the fountain with recycled water as a compromise position if the cost were not too great.

While the fountain was never designed to accommodate use by humans or animals. Salmon said the use of recycled water might discourage unproved use but he didn't support any additional enforcement of the no-wading rule "It's not a pool but if someone wants to wade in it, we hope they'd watch their children," he said.

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